

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Below is the entire set of pending claims pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.121(c)(3)(i), with any mark-ups showing the changes made by the present Amendment.

1 to 64 (Canceled)

65. (Currently amended) A plug fastener, comprising:

a first hemispheroidal portion;

a second hemispheroidal portion opposed to the first hemispheroidal portion, the first and second hemispheroidal portions being symmetrical to one another about their plane of opposition, each hemispheroidal portion comprising:

a mating surface truncating the respective hemispheroidal portion, the mating surface defining a mating plane that is parallel to the plane of opposition whereby the mating planes of the respective first and second hemispheroidal portions are opposite from each other across the plane of opposition, and

ridges extending outwardly from the respective hemispheroidal portions between the mating surfaces and the plane of opposition; and

an aperture defined within and extending through the first and second hemispheroidal portions, the aperture having a first countersink defined within an opening in the first mating surface and a second countersink defined within an opening in the second mating surface, and having a screw disposed in the aperture.

66. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the ridges are deformable ridges.

67. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein one of the mating surfaces is adapted to be affixed to a flat surface of a railing.

68. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 67, wherein the plug fastener is adapted to be affixed to be received within a baluster to be attached to the railing.

69. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 68, wherein the ridges are deformable ridges and have resiliency sufficient to frictionally engage an interior surface within an opening in the baluster such that the baluster is substantially fixed with respect to railing.

70. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 68, wherein the plug fastener is adapted to be hidden from view after the baluster is attached to the railing.

71. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 67, wherein a head of the screw is substantially tapered.

72. (Currently amended) A plug fastener according to claim 71, wherein the head of the screw is disposed within one of the first and ~~or~~ second countersinks.

73. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the ridges on the first hemispheroidal portion are directed towards the ridges on the second hemispheroidal portion.

74. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein a profile view of the ridges has a substantially triangular shape.

75. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the plug fastener is non-metallic.

76. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 75, wherein the plug fastener comprises a material selected from the group consisting of plastic, nylon, polyvinyl chloride, and polyurethane.

77. (Canceled)

78. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the ridges outwardly extending from the exterior surfaces of the hemispheroidal portions define a substantially spherical shape for the plug fastener.

79. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the first and second hemispheroidal portions define a substantially spherical shape.

80. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the aperture is substantially cylindrical between the countersinks.

81. (Previously presented) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the aperture is substantially perpendicular with respect to the plane of opposition.